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MONTANA OUTDOORS

A Century of Conservation

SPECIAL CENTENNIAL ISSUE

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Our Point of View

PHOTO BY ROBERT F. COONEY

As we enter the year 2001, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will embark on its second century of serving the people of Montana. This occasion gives us pause to reflect on where we have been, as well as to imagine the future we want to create.

In Montana, as around the world, changes are occurring that will result in challenges in the years ahead. To put today's issues in perspective, consider for a moment the challenges Montanans faced at the dawn of the 20th century. Market and subsistence hunting and fishing had nearly eliminated once common species of fish and wildlife. There was no Fish, Wildlife & Parks agency. There also weren't any funds dedicated to wildlife conservation.

The people of Montana took a bold step in 1901 by creating the framework for a state wildlife conservation agency and imposing a hunting license fee to support wildlife conservation. They recognized a challenge, and they took action. As the need for immediate protection grew into an idea of restoration, rebuilding fish and wildlife populations became a community-wide partnership among landowners, hunters, and anglers. The makeup of the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission reflects that partnership, as it has for more than a century.

This Special Centennial Issue of *Montana Outdoors* tells the story of how several generations of Montanans gave selflessly to restore and conserve wildlife in Montana, as well as build our state park system. It is a story of hard work and sacrifice, often against overwhelming odds. It is a story we can all take pride in, because together we have preserved our outdoor heritage and our Montana way of life.

As you page through this magazine, we hope you will gain a new appreciation for the vision of the men and women who have served our agency over the past 100 years. As we begin FWP's second century, we have an opportunity to revitalize that vision, rekindle partnerships, and build on one of the most successful conservation stories in the world.

Pat

Pat Graham
Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

A Century of Conservation

MONTANA OUTDOORS
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2000 VOLUME 31, NUMBER 6

Montana Outdoors dedicates this issue to the Department employees, Commissioners, sportsmen and women, and landowners whose collective efforts have made Montana's fish, wildlife, and parks resources among the finest in the world.

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Cover

"Sun River Challenge," a commemorative painting by renowned western artist *Larry Zabel*, celebrates Montana's century of commitment to restoring our natural and cultural resources. The Sun River Wildlife Management Area, acquired in 1947, provides vital winter range for elk along the east slope of the Rocky Mountain Front.

The Vanishing

"In many parts of the Territory deer, antelope and elk are openly killed for the hides only, and no part of the carcass used for food. If this wholesale slaughter is to continue, the game of the Territory will soon be exhausted."

—Governor Benjamin F. Potts, Montana Territory, January 10, 1888

COURTESY OF DAN HILGER

COURTESY OF VICKY MCLUC

By the 1890s, when these pictures were taken near Helena, extensive hunting of deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and other animals had taken its toll. The wildlife abundance of the Old West was slipping into history when Montana's first conservation commission struggled into existence in 1895.

A CENTURY OF CONSERVATION 1901 2001

Frontier

With the dawning of the year 2001, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) will begin a year-long celebration of its 100-year anniversary. In 1901, at the urging of Governor John E. Rickards, Montana's seventh state legislature passed, almost unanimously in both houses, "...an Act to provide for the appointment of a State game and fish warden, deputy game and fish wardens and special deputy game and fish wardens...to examine into and inquire about any violation of the game and fish laws of the state." Rickards promptly appointed W.F. Scott as state game warden, marking the beginning of Montana's fish, wildlife, and parks agency and a century of conservation progress for our state's wildlife and recreational resources.

While Governor Rickards' action in 1901 created the agency we now know as FWP, it was by no means Montana's first effort on behalf of wildlife conservation. Historian Joan Louise Brownell points out that during Montana's territorial and early statehood periods, "Many individuals—governors, legislators, sportsmen, and pioneers—recognized the detrimental effects of civilization's relentless advance and sought to protect wildlife." The first territorial legislature in 1865 passed a law prohibiting construction of dams, use of seines or nets, and use of drugs or poisons "intending to catch, kill or destroy any species of fish." Subsequent legislatures established closed seasons to protect game species for a portion of the year, outlawed dumping of sawdust into streams, and prohibited killing of songbirds.

While passage of these laws reflected genuine concern on the part of early Montanans for wildlife conservation, there was one problem: enforcement of the laws was practically nonexistent. As Brownell notes, "The vastness of Montana Territory increased the difficulty in enforcing wildlife laws, and the legislature was particularly lax regarding enforcement." Although the last territorial legislature in 1889 authorized counties to appoint game wardens, only four of 24 counties had done so by 1900.

To comprehend the plight of wildlife in the late 1800s, we need only look at how the West changed in the eight decades following the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Explorers, fur trappers, miners, market hunters, and settlers in turn flocked to Montana, exploiting the abundant wildlife for food and profit. By 1850, a thriving fur industry had come and gone. In the 1860s, the discovery of gold triggered a rush of prospectors. Cattlemen soon followed, trailing the first herds of longhorns north from Texas.

David Hilger, who came to Montana in 1867, marveled years later at how quickly the buffalo had disappeared: "In 1867 when I crossed the plains from Minnesota to Helena, Montana, game was abundant, particularly buffalo...and in 1886 the buffalo were gone." Wild game became the primary source of food for the flourishing mining camps and settlements, and the hides of buffalo, deer, elk, wolves, and many other animals were shipped east to market. Conservationist George Bird Grinnell noted that elk, mule deer, and antelope were slaughtered "by thousands each year, without regard to age or sex, and at all seasons."

On the national level, market hunting, settlement, and habitat destruction had taken a devastating toll. The passenger pigeon, whose vast migratory flocks once darkened the sky, was on a fast track to extinction in the 1880s. White-tailed deer, thought to number 34 million when Columbus set sail for North America, had dwindled to less than half a million by 1900.

Yet, as the 19th century drew to a close, the winds of change were blowing. In Montana, as in many other states, sportsmen realized the folly of unlimited harvest and began to press for stronger wildlife laws and better enforcement of existing laws. In 1895, six years after Montana achieved statehood, the Fourth State Legislature established the first Montana Board of Game and Fish Commissioners, the forerunner of today's Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission.

By 1900, game wardens were employed in 31 states. Passage of the Lacey Act by the U.S. Congress in 1900 made it a federal crime to transport illegally killed birds across state borders and set controls on trade of bird feathers and commercial killing of game. A national consciousness was emerging that would set the stage for a century of wildlife restoration unrivaled anywhere in the world—a conservation triumph in which Montana would play a prominent role.

1865
Territorial legislature passes first law protecting wildlife.

1872
Lawmakers establish first closed season on big game from Feb. 1 to Aug. 15 each year.

1886
Montana's bison reduced to remnant herds.

1895
Fourth State Legislature establishes Board of Game and Fish Commissioners.

Early Awakenings

When Governor Rickards appointed W.F. Scott as state game warden on April 1, 1901, Scott in turn appointed eight deputy game and fish wardens throughout the state, the maximum allowed by law. The warden districts these men patrolled averaged 18,000 square miles! The wardens, who traveled by train with their horses from town to town, received $100 per month including expenses. By the end of the decade, the number of deputy wardens would increase to 15. These were the Department's only field employees at the time.

In addition to creating a fish and game agency, the 1901 Legislature took another important step by passing a law requiring hunters to pay for programs that regulate and benefit them through purchase of a hunting license. It applied only to nonresidents who were nontaxpayers, and called for a fee of $25 for a big game license and $15 for a gamebird license.

In 1902, W.F. Scott was instrumental in forming the National Association of Game and Fish Wardens and Commissioners—now called the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies—at a meeting in Yellowstone National Park. Eight agents from six states appeared at this first gathering, at which Scott was elected president.

The first Montana resident hunting and fishing licenses, issued in 1905, cost $1 per family. With the advent of license sales, the clerical workload increased and additional office help was needed in Helena. The fledgling agency sold more than 30,000 licenses in 1905.

In 1907, the hunting season extended from September 1 to December 1, with a three-deer bag limit. The limit on elk, antelope, sheep, and goat was set at one of each species. Hunters could take 10 grouse per day, but there was no limit on waterfowl. Moose, bison, and caribou were protected, as were "Meadow-lark, Blue-bird, Thrush (robin), Oriole, Woodpecker, Mocking-bird, Goldfinch, Snowbird, Cedar-bird, Stork, or any of the other small birds known as singing birds." The first nonresident fishing license was adopted in 1907, at a cost of $1.

FWP PHOTO

W.F. Scott—Montana's first state game warden

In 1908, Montana's first state fish hatchery was constructed at Anaconda on land donated by the Butte, Anaconda, and Pacific Railroad. The Anaconda hatchery specialized in raising cutthroat trout, shipping them by rail to

1901
Governor Rickards appoints W.F. Scott as State Game Warden, creating FWP.

1902
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies formed.

1903
43 arrests made for killing game out of season, dynamiting fish, and other infractions.

1904
Largemouth bass introduced to Montana.

"If ever a state needed protection for game and needed it badly, Montana needs it now."
—Morton Elrod, Chairman of the Board of Game and Fish Commissioners, 1900

numerous points around western Montana.

Wildfires devastated western Montana in 1910, prompting these entries in the Department's Biennial Report: "On Bull River fifty blacktail deer were found dead in one bunch....Trout Creek, Bull River and Beaver Creek ran hot during the fire, thus killing all the fish of these streams....The St. Regis River and Fish Creek...also ran hot, destroying all fish. The loss of human life is known to have been seventy-two persons in this section....From commendatory reports received...I am led to believe that the [deputy wardens] in whose districts fires existed rendered valuable assistance in fire fighting."

Also in 1910, the first elk were transplanted into Montana from Yellowstone National Park, marking the beginning of an aggressive elk relocation and restoration program. "The pride of our game animals is the elk," wrote State Game and Fish Warden Henry Avare in 1910. "For a fleeting glance at the tossing antlers and the sound of the whistle of a frightened bull elk, many lovers of nature and her animals would travel across a continent." Although dark days would lie ahead for Montana's wildlife, a conservation conscience had arrived.

COURTESY OF VICKY MCLUCAS

The state's elk population was at low ebb when these Montana deputy game wardens gathered in Gardiner to oversee the shipment of Yellowstone elk by rail car to destinations around the state. Pictured from left to right are P.W. Nelson, D.H. Morgan, J.R. Froman, W.W. McCormick, and Henry Ferguson.

1905
Hunting and fishing license required for Montana residents.

1906
Elk hunting permitted in only four states, including Montana.

1909
Daily bag limit on ducks set at 20 per day.

1910
Elk transplanted to Montana from Yellowstone National Park.

Changing Times

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

Montana's first state fish hatchery, built at Anaconda in 1908, raised and distributed more than four million grayling and rainbow, brook, and cutthroat trout in 1912.

Lured by the promise of free land and agricultural prosperity, homesteaders flooded into Montana. These hardy souls, mostly from the Midwest, had "proved up" on roughly 40 percent of the state's land area by 1920—more than 37 million acres. Native prairie rapidly went under the plow and, by the end of the decade, 3.5 million acres were planted in wheat. Montana's population, which stood at 376,000 in 1910, mushroomed to almost 549,000 by 1920. This wave of humanity, together with overgrazing and the market hunting excesses of previous decades, put the state's wildlife resources in a tailspin.

To its credit, the State Department of Game and Fish, now scarcely a decade old, its commissioners, and the community at large had begun to take action to stem the tide of wildlife destruction. The logic of the day, understandably based on principles of animal husbandry, dictated these broad measures: season closures, predator control, restocking of depleted game and fish populations, and establishing areas off limits to hunting.

"To this end," says Dr. Harold Picton, Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Management at Montana State University, "The legislature and commission members began to establish wildlife preserves in 1911....this was done for well-intentioned political reasons but without giving much consideration to the biology of the species." By the end of the decade a dozen game preserves and refuges had been set aside throughout Montana.

Season closures were dictated by the low levels to which many wildlife species had sunk. As native prairie disappeared, the state's antelope population, numbering more than

1911
Montana Fish and Game Commission increased from three to five members.

1912
Bobwhite quail introduced unsuccessfully in Deer Lodge and Powell counties.

1913
Daily bull trout limit set at 50 pounds.

1914
Last passenger pigeon dies in the Cincinnati Zoo.

"The time has now arrived when it is necessary for a radical change in many of our laws, otherwise, there will be a notable decrease of our game animals from this time on."

—State Game and Fish Warden Henry Avare, 1911

two million in the late 1800s, declined to fewer than 5,000. Elk had been completely eliminated from eastern Montana and reduced to scattered herds in the western mountains. Bighorn sheep suffered extensive die-offs due to competition and diseases transmitted from domestic sheep and livestock. The Audubon bighorn, a race inhabiting the lower Yellowstone and Missouri River drainages in eastern Montana, disappeared in 1916. Moose numbers dwindled to a few hundred, despite a hunting closure enacted in 1897. Deer, too, were in decline, with much of eastern Montana closed to deer hunting by 1917.

By 1920, more than 200 elk had been shipped from Yellowstone Park to various destinations in Montana to form the nucleus of new herds. The idea of wildlife replenishment extended to gamebirds as well: The Department, as well as sportsmen's groups, introduced ring-necked pheasants and quail around the state, but often with little thought to these species' biological requirements. Gambel's quail, indigenous to the desert Southwest, were released in several Montana counties in 1917 and 1918!

Some of the most extensive artificial stocking took place with trout and other fish. A hatchery at Somers in northwestern Montana was completed in 1912, and the existing operation at Anaconda was enlarged. During the 1912 season, more than four million trout (rainbow, brook, and cutthroat trout) and grayling were raised and distributed by the Anaconda hatchery. By 1920, the federal hatchery at Bozeman had installed an auxiliary station at McAllister near the Madison River, and the state hatchery system had expanded to 12 units, which included hatcheries as well as egg-taking stations. In addition, several private hatcheries operated by sportsmen's groups were planting fish whenever they saw fit.

During the decade, noted former fisheries chief William Alvord, who researched the early history of FWP's Fisheries Division, "Practically every accessible water in the state received fish of some kind at the discretion of the planter and without regard to actual need or desirability. A scientific basis for fish stocking was still well in the future." As with the state's early gamebird transplants, fish stocking was largely a matter of plant and hope.

By 1920, the grassroots movement to restore and conserve wildlife was alive and well in Montana, even if its methods were sometimes misguided. It would be another decade or more before the importance of habitat—the food, cover, and water on which wildlife depend—would find its way into conservation discussions.

FWP PHOTO

For many years this railroad car played an integral role in the Department's fish planting program. Sportsmen met the fish car at the station, loaded their allotment of fish onto cars, trucks, or pack horses, and hauled them to the waters to be stocked.

1915
Bighorn sheep season closes and remains closed for 38 years.

1916
Last Audubon bighorn sheep killed in Missouri River Breaks.

1917
Much of eastern Montana closed to deer hunting; elk reduced to scattered mountain herds.

1920
Montana's population reaches 549,000.

The Commission

"Civilization has almost wiped out the antelope. The herds of thousands that once dotted the plains of eastern and central Montana have dwindled to a few protected hundred. They have gone the way of the buffalo."

—Editor Floyd L. Smith, Montana Wild Life, *1930*

Up until 1917, the weather had been kind to Montana's homesteaders. Rain fell, wheat grew, and farmers borrowed money to buy more land and equipment. Then the bottom dropped out. In 1919, towns along the Hi-Line in eastern Montana received only nine inches of rain, some less. "Between 1900 and 1916," wrote historian K. Ross Toole, "Montana land had averaged twenty-five bushels of wheat to the acre. In 1919, the average was two and four-tenths bushel. At the going price of wheat and land, this meant a $50,000,000 loss for Montana...." In 1920 the winds came, and then the grasshoppers. The drought broke in the mid-1920s, but by then one out of every two farmers had been driven from the land.

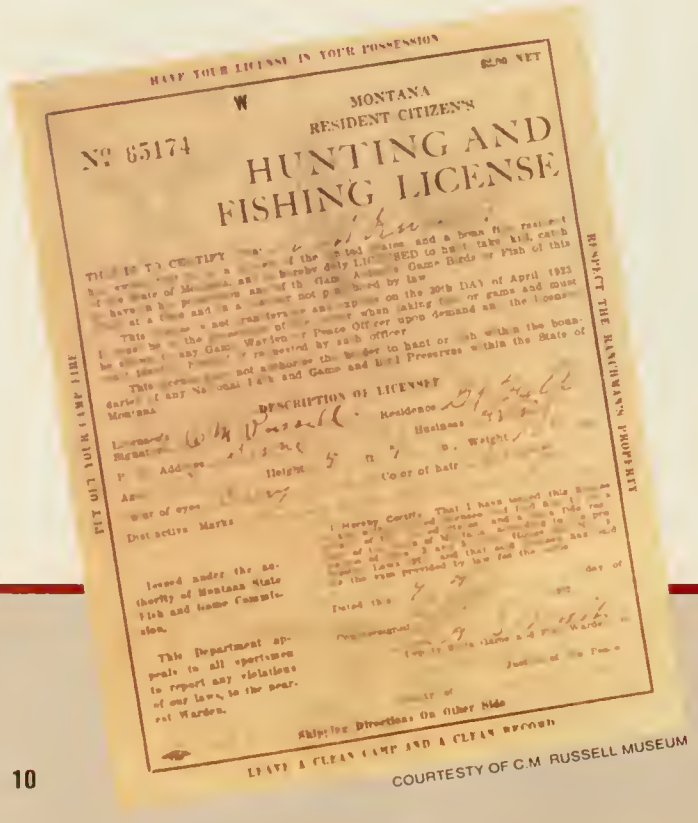
Despite the catastrophic farm economy, the decade began auspiciously for wildlife conservationists. In 1921 the Montana Legislature gave the Board of Game and Fish Commissioners the authority to open and close seasons on game species and to establish game preserves on its own. With its expanded powers, the Commission—now formally referred to as the Montana State Fish and Game Commission—set about restoring wildlife with renewed vigor.

Buoyed by Alberta's successful introduction of Hungarian partridge, and the fact that some of these European imports had already drifted south into Montana, the Department began an aggressive stocking campaign. In 1922, about 2,000 birds from Europe were released in 45 counties around the state. Stocking continued until State Game Warden Robert H. Hill could claim in 1929 that "a total of 6,600 Hungarian partridges—the gamiest little game bird of them all—had been purchased from game farms in Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and other European countries since 1922."

Ring-necked pheasant stocking, too, continued unabated. By 1929, about 7,000 birds had been released. "These beautiful birds have thrived wonderfully well since they were imported and planted by the Montana Commission," said Commission member W.K. Moore of Billings, "and in some counties farmers complain that they are causing damage."

Opinion was divided on whether Montana's new gamebird could withstand a hunting season. In response to petitions by sportsmen and complaints of crop damage from farmers, the Commission set a controversial two-day season for Novem-

Montana artist C.M. Russell accompanied friends on hunting trips every fall for 20 years. "I am as you know a harmless hunter," he wrote Ed Neitzling in 1924, but I sure like to git out with a good bunch."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W

MONTANA
RESIDENT CITIZENS'

No. 65174

HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSE

DESCRIPTION OF LICENSEE

Residence

Business

Age

Weight

Color of hair

Color of eyes

Distinctive Marks

Issued under the authority of Montana State Fish and Game Commission.

This Department appeals to all sportsmen to report any violations of our laws, to the nearest Warden.

Shipping Directions On Other Side

LEAVE A CLEAN CAMP AND A CLEAN screen

PUT OUT YOUR CAMP FIRE

RESPECT THE RANCHMAN'S PROPERTY

COURTESY OF C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM

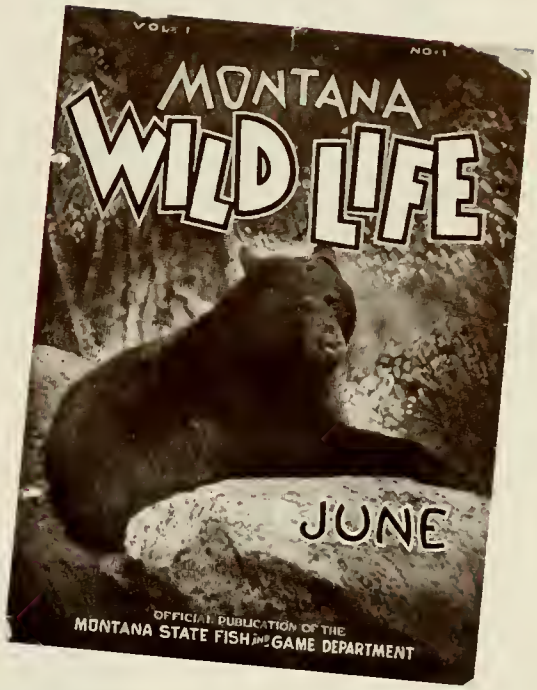
1922

More than 2,500 pheasants and Hungarian partridge released across the state.

1924

Resident hunting and fishing license sales reach 56,113.

Comes of Age



Published between 1928 and 1933, *Montana Wild Life* was one of the nation's first state conservation magazines.

ber 24 and 25, 1928. The predicted slaughter failed to materialize and few birds were killed, prompting this official sigh of relief: "Chinese pheasants, multicolored Mongolian foxes of the field, have given Montana sportsmen a thrilling demonstration of their ability to take care of themselves....They kept under cover...and when volleys were fired they zoomed through the pattern."

Despite the Commission's success with pheasants and Huns, not all its planting efforts bore fruit. Repeated attempts to establish bobwhite, Gambel's, and California (valley) quail met with failure.

At the same time game populations were being rebuilt, the Commission attacked predators with a vengeance. Coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bobcats, badgers, skunks, crows, magpies, hawks, owls, and eagles were trapped, shot, and poisoned by federal and state trappers and hunters as well as members of sportsmen's clubs. Killing predators was equated with saving game, and sportsmen felt duty-bound to help.

Early Montanans saved their strongest reproach for livestock killers, like the great white wolf of Stanford, which eluded trappers and hunters for a decade. When the wolf finally fell to a hunter's bullet in 1930, Elva Wineman of Stanford described it in terms better suited to Public Enemy No. 1: "By nature a cunning strategist, cruel and brutish...the big white wolf became still more devilishly murderous, a killer and an outlaw...." But even Wineman couldn't help rhapsodizing a bit over the wolf's passing: "...the shadowy trails will know him no more, for the lone white wolf is dead."

If predators were at the top of the Commission's hit list, poachers and game-hogs weren't far behind. Montana's growing deputy warden force—now numbering 26—handled 407 violations in 1928.

To its credit, the Commission recognized early on that wildlife restoration could not succeed without a strong educational effort, and in 1928 launched *Montana Wild Life*, the forerunner of *Montana Outdoors*. In the inaugural June edition, Commission Chairman Thomas N. Marlowe announced: "This publication will be the official publication of the Commission and through its columns we expect to give to sportsmen of this state authoritative information as to what our program is and what is being done by the department to make hunting and fishing conditions better in this state."

By the end of the decade, the State Game and Fish Commission could point to several significant accomplishments: 14 fish hatcheries providing millions of fingerlings each year; 33 game preserves and sanctuaries embracing some 2 million acres; new elk herds initiating from the Yellowstone transplants; thriving populations of pheasants and Huns; a game farm constructed at Warm Springs for gamebird propagation; and more than 80,000 resident hunting and fishing licenses sold annually.

Yet, wildlife still suffered on many fronts. In 1926, the U.S. Biological Survey estimated Montana's antelope population at 3,027—dangerously close to extinction. After a few years of normal moisture in the mid-1920s, drought returned in 1929, prompting destructive forest fires and an early closure of the fishing season. This time it would be a decade before the rains would come again.

1925
Montana's antelope population estimated at 3,000.

1926
Department acquires first land for game management—27 acres at Red Rock Lakes.

1928
Commission sets first pheasant hunting season.

1930
First duck band recovered in Montana.

"The 'best' [game management] plan is the one most nearly mutually satisfactory to the three parties at interest, namely the landowner, the sportsman, and the general public."

—*Aldo Leopold*, Game Management, *1933*

The Dirty Thirties

In 1929, the Great Depression and severe drought struck the nation like a fist to the solar plexus. In Montana, wheat prices tumbled. Most of Montana's remaining farmers had survived the tough times of the early twenties, but even for these seasoned veterans the situation was grim. By 1935 one-fourth of all Montana's population was on relief.

Not surprisingly, hunting and fishing license sales declined, prompting Commission Chairman W.P. Sullivan to note: "Departmental revenues have decreased in Montana as well as in all other western states as a result of the nationwide depression, but every division of the department has continued to function creditably under curtailed expenses." As a cost-cutting measure, the Department ceased publication of *Montana Wild Life* in 1933, and would not have another official magazine until 1950.

COURTESY OF THE ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION ARCHIVES

Aldo Leopold's book *Game Management* helped establish wildlife management as a profession in 1933.

In the 1933-34 Biennial Report, Sullivan reported that "...extremely high temperatures and lack of rainfall during the last two summers brought an unparalleled drought condition with coincident suffering and loss to upland and migratory birds and game fish in the lesser trout streams of the state." Budget cuts in the Fisheries Division resulted in a reduction in hours for many hatchery employees.

In other parts of the country, the situation was equally dire. Conditions for wildlife worsened as drought and dust storms gripped the nation. Waterfowl populations hit all-time lows, and the conservation gains made earlier in the century began to erode.

Yet, thanks to the heroic efforts of men like Jay N. "Ding" Darling, Carl Shoemaker, and Aldo Leopold, the decade would go down as one of the most important in American wildlife history. The reason was passage of federal legislation during the Roosevelt administration that had far-reaching consequences, and the emergence of national wildlife organizations like Ducks Unlimited, the American Wildlife Institute (later renamed the Wildlife Management Institute), and the

1932
Blue grouse season reopened after several years of closure.

1933
First chukar partridge released in Dawson County.

1934
Congress passes the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act and issues first federal duck stamp.

1935
Valley quail released in several Montana counties.

National Wildlife Federation.

First came Aldo Leopold's book *Game Management* in 1933, which launched wildlife management as a scientific discipline and challenged the outdated ideas of game sanctuaries and artificial propagation as panaceas for restoring wildlife. Leopold saw clearly that wildlife abundance depended on proper care of the land.

Then in 1934 Congress passed the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, more commonly known as the Duck Stamp Act. Jay N. "Ding" Darling, whose syndicated cartoons in support of wildlife conservation had gained a national reputation, was tapped by FDR in 1934 to head the Bureau of Biological Survey. Alarmed at the downward spiral in waterfowl populations, Darling recognized the need for a permanent source of revenue to protect wetlands. With the help of other conservationists, he guided a bill through Congress that required every waterfowl hunter 16 years of age or older to buy a stamp each year. Over the past 65 years, proceeds from duck stamp sales have financed the purchase of millions of acres of key wetlands—lands that now form the backbone of our National Wildlife Refuge System.

COURTESY OF THE DES MOINES REGISTER

J.N. "Ding" Darling, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey and a Pulitizer Prize-winning cartoonist, designed the first federal duck stamp in 1934.

1936
Lewis and Clark Caverns becomes Montana's first state park.

1937
Congress passes the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act.

1939
State versus Rathbone case establishes important game damage precedent.

1940
First big game winter range (Judith River) acquired with sportsmen's dollars.

1931-1940

DAVE BOOKS

Located a few miles from Utica at the east end of the Little Belt Mountains, the Judith River game range was the first tract purchased with sportsmen's money for the benefit of wintering elk. Today, the Judith River Wildlife Management Area encompasses more than 9,000 acres.

Darling also championed the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit Program in 1935 and the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act in 1937, but much of the credit for the latter goes to Carl Shoemaker. As secretary for the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Conservation of Wildlife Resources, Shoemaker wrote the original bill, obtained the sponsorship of Senator Key Pittman of Nevada and Congressman A. Willis Robertson of Virginia, and shepherded the measure through Congress. Administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pittman-Robertson Act levies a federal excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition, handguns, and archery equipment. Each year these "P-R" funds are reapportioned to the states on a matching basis for wildlife restoration and hunter safety education.

While national legislation held great promise for Montana's wildlife, events were unfolding on the state level that also would have much significance for hunters and others concerned with wildlife policy. By 1935, the elk transplants from Yellowstone Park had begun to take effect in places like the Little Belt Mountains, and mule deer populations were rebounding as well. During the earlier years of wildlife scarcity, much of the state's deer and elk winter range had been overgrazed by livestock, a problem now compounded by drought.

As the decade progressed and deer and elk numbers continued to rise, the Department began to receive more and more damage complaints from landowners. It became obvious that high-quality winter habitat dedicated to use by wildlife was needed to meet the biological needs of the growing herds and to help solve depredation problems. In 1940, the Department made its first significant purchase of big game winter range: 1,004 acres in the Little Belt Mountains, forming the nucleus of what is now the 9,408-acre Judith River Wildlife Management Area.

Just as significant, perhaps, as the new commitment to providing adequate food and cover for wintering wildlife was creation in 1940 of the position of State Big Game Manager

and the hiring of a young biologist named Robert F. Cooney to fill it. Over a long and distinguished career, he would oversee broad expansion of Montana's game range system and re-establishment of antelope, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and many other game species throughout the state. For these and other accomplishments, Cooney received an American Motors Conservation Award in 1958.

The dirty thirties had been tough on Montana's people and in many respects its wildlife, but from these turbulent times had risen a scientific approach to wildlife conservation and a new funding source that would guide the state's efforts far into the future. With the nation teetering on the brink of World War II, the foundation had been laid for a wildlife restoration program that would become a model for the rest of the nation.

FWP PHOTO

The hiring of biologist Robert F. Cooney as the Department's first state big game manager marked the beginning of a scientific approach to wildlife management in Montana.

BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, CODY, WY CHARLES BELDEN COLLECTION

FWP PHOTO

Despite tough economic times and budget cuts brought on by the Great Depression, the Department continued stocking fish throughout the 1930s. Above, Shell Oil Company pilot Herman Henrickson readies his plane for takeoff in an early fish planting experiment. At left, a pack string heads for the high country with a cargo of milk cans filled with trout fingerlings.

"In 1941 bighorn sheep were considered an endangered species and all western states were trying to unravel the mysteries of its loss."

—Faye Couey and Allen Schallenberger in Game Management in Montana

The War Years

In December of 1941, in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II. Many young Montanans, Department employees included, went off to war, prompting this pledge in the foreword to the Commission's 1941-1942 Biennial Report: "No matter how curtailed the personnel of the Department or its facilities, there is an obligation that will not be broken. Wildlife must be so managed that when the boys who are fighting for us return, they will be able to again enjoy the pleasures and the solace of the out-of-doors and the wild things that are so much a part of it. We can certainly do no less."

According to Bob Cooney, head of the Department's new Wildlife Restoration Division, there was an even more immediate concern. "I was told the restoration program was of national importance," Cooney said in a 1989 interview with FWP information officer Tom Palmer. "Wildlife was considered a national asset. If there was an invasion on either coast that would have forced an inland retreat, the thought was that there would at least be a supply of meat. In those years, it was something that was pretty much on our minds."

Apparently it was on the War Department's mind, too. Bob Cooney tried to join the armed forces on more than one occasion. Once he made it to the Salt Lake City train station before federal agents sent him back to Helena.

The Commission now had a two-pronged problem: The war effort required that Montana's wildlife populations be rebuilt, but where wildlife numbers came into conflict with agricultural production, "adequate control measures" would be needed. During the remainder of the decade, wildlife damage—particularly the winter range problem—would loom large in the Department's priorities.

Actually, an incident a few years earlier had brought the issue to a boil. In 1939, C.R. Rathbone, a rancher along the Rocky Mountain Front near Augusta, was arrested for illegally killing an elk on his land. Rathbone had placed an ad in a newspaper the previous year offering to hire people to machine-gun up to 1,000 elk, contending he was justified in killing elk out of season if they were damaging his property. Rathbone was arrested and convicted, and he eventually appealed his case to the Montana Supreme Court. In a 1940 decision, the court held as follows: "One who acquires property in Montana does so with notice and knowledge of the presence of wild game and presumably is cognizant of its natural habits....Accordingly, a property owner in this state must recognize the fact that there may be

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

1941
Pittman-Robertson program begins in Montana.

1942
First bighorn sheep transplanted from Sun River to Gates of the Mountains.

1943
Antelope hunting renewed on an annual basis.

1945
First moose season held since 1896.

COURTESTY OF VICKY MCLUCAS

As the Department's live-trapping foreman, the late Jim McLucas (center of photo) played a major role in restoring wildlife throughout Montana and other western states. He is shown in 1959 with U.S. Marine Corps personnel during an unusual assignment that took him to Hawaii with 85 antelope captured near Malta.

some injury to property or inconvenience from wild game for which there is no recourse." The Rathbone case established an important legal precedent concerning wildlife damage but also served as a catalyst for acquisition of big game winter range.

In 1947 an opportunity arose that forever changed the fate of elk along the Rocky Mountain Front. Late that year a rancher named Brucegard with land bordering the Lewis and Clark National Forest west of Augusta abruptly offered his land for sale to the Montana Fish and Game Department. According to Harold and Irene Picton, who wrote *Saga of the Sun*, "This offer was made at 11 o'clock on a Saturday and the banks closed at 12. A certified check had to be delivered that day or the land would revert to another buyer. The Department could not raise the money on such short notice so Mr. O'Claire, the State Game Warden, called Tom Messelt [a Great Falls sportsman] and Carl Malone [a Choteau-area rancher]. These two gentlemen raised $10,000 between them and saved the land for the elk." Today, the Sun River Wildlife Management Area totals more than 20,000 acres and provides winter habitat for more than 2,000 elk—80 to 95 percent of the Sun River elk herd.

The next year the Boyd Ranch west of the Continental Divide near Ovando was offered for sale. This land, purchased with revenue from Montana hunting license sales and federal Pittman-Robertson dollars, is now part of the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area. It also provides important winter habitat for deer and elk that spend summer in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Despite the increasing deer and elk herds in western Montana, portions of the state remained completely devoid of some wildlife species. To remedy this situation, the Department began an aggressive trapping and transplanting campaign. Between 1941 and 1950, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, antelope, sage grouse, ring-necked pheasants, pine marten, and beaver were all trapped and relocated. Much of this work could not have been accomplished without the consent and assistance of Montana's private landowners, the majority of whom have always wanted wildlife on their land.

Capturing and transporting wildlife in the 1940s took hard work and no small amount of ingenuity. Mountain goats, trapped high on the cliffs of the Rocky Mountain Front, were moved to lower elevations in horse-drawn carts or in crates loaded on packhorses. Some goats trapped in the Bob Marshall Wilderness were floated down the South Fork of the Flathead River in rubber rafts to an airstrip, flown out of the wilderness, and trucked to release sites in other mountain ranges.

Montana's wildlife relocation work got a major boost when a young Butte native named Jim McLucas returned from the war and signed on as the Department's live-trapping foreman. A tough, skilled outdoorsman with an inventive mind and a knack for predicting wildlife behavior, McLucas quickly became an expert at safely trapping and transporting many species of wildlife. In a career that spanned nearly four

1946
First antelope transplanted from Winston to Horseshoe Hills.

1947
Department hires its first fisheries biologist.

1948
Blackfoot-Clearwater game range acquired.

1950
Congress passes the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Act.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICKY MCLUCAS

COURTESTY OF VICKY MCLUCAS

Transplanting mountain goats in the 1940s was dangerous, difficult work. Goats trapped in the Deep Creek area west of Choteau were packed in crates and moved down the mountain by mule-drawn, rubber-tired carts. Others were captured on the upper South Fork of the Flathead River, loaded into rafts, and floated downriver to an airstrip.

decades, he relocated over 16,000 animals throughout Montana and helped neighboring states and Canadian provinces with their transplanting programs. Perhaps his most unusual assignment involved trapping 85 antelope near Malta in 1959, trucking them to Seattle, and accompanying them for six days on a ship to Hawaii where they were met by Marine Corps planes and flown to the island of Lanai.

Wildlife transplanting efforts were aided by post-war technology, as four-wheel drive trucks, motorboats, snow "toboggans" (primitive snowmobiles), and airplanes came into wider use. Dr. Picton notes that early antelope trapping employed the sagebrush-level flying skills of Cliff McBratney, a pilot from Augusta, and later Jim Stradley of the Gallatin Flying Service and Don Brown of the Department. McLucas had the help of many Department employees, including shop foreman Rex Smart who designed and fabricated an antelope trap that gained wide usage throughout the West.

In addition to its relocation work, the Wildlife Restoration Division was charged by the Commission with "recognizing the scientific point of view" and initiating studies "dealing with game birds, game animals, and fur bearers." In summer of 1941, several young biologists under the direction of Bob Cooney undertook a wildlife survey of eastern Montana. As retired biologist Merle Rognrud recalls, "Bill Bergeson, Faye Coney, Hector LaCasse, James Beer, and I started with our backs to the North Dakota border and worked our way westward, surveying game birds and other wildlife in every county along the way."

By 1942 the Department's law enforcement activities had

advanced on several fronts. Game warden applicants were required to take a written examination to demonstrate their knowledge of big game, game birds, and furbearers, and in-service training sessions for wardens featured wildlife experts from universities as well as personnel from the FBI, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Public Health Service, and the Montana Veterinary Research Laboratory in Hamilton. To cope with the sharp increase in hunters and anglers after the war, the legislature increased the number of game wardens from 27 to 45. The state was divided into five warden districts, with a district warden supervisor for each.

Fisheries work, too, gained impetus as wartime restrictions were lifted; several hatcheries were expanded and improved, including those at Anaconda, Arlee, Emigrant, and Lewistown. In 1947 the Department established a biology section in the Fisheries Division to "conduct experiments and gather information....and on the basis of these findings, to develop and test new fish management measures." Under the direction of Charles K. Phenicie, biologists began studies on growth, food habits, and distribution of various species, and developed a creel census program. Bluewater Springs Hatchery was constructed at Bridger in 1949.

By 1950, Montanans had outdoor opportunities available to them they could only have dreamed of a few short years before. At the beginning of the decade, less than half the state was open to deer hunting, and the season was bucks-only; by the end of the decade, limited either-sex seasons had been established and the deer harvest had doubled. The mule deer was now Montana's most abundant big game animal, with an estimated population of 172,000. Limited hunting seasons for antelope and moose had been re-established. Pheasant hunters harvested an estimated 200,000 birds in 1948. Hunting and fishing license sales had risen from about 154,000 in 1941 to more than 285,000 by 1950. The post-war economy was humming, Montanans had more leisure time, and they were spending it in the great outdoors.

DAVE BOOKS

The Sun River Wildlife Management Area, situated west of Augusta along the Rocky Mountain Front, was acquired for elk winter range in 1947.

Dedicated to Wildlife

Montana's wildlife management areas provide vital habitat for elk, deer, bighorn sheep, waterfowl, pheasants, grouse, and an array of game and nongame mammals and birds. These sites range in size from a 2-acre tract near the northeastern entrance of Yellowstone National Park to the 54,137-acre Mount Haggin property south of Anaconda.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act—better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act—has been instrumental in providing funds for acquisition and development of Montana's wildlife management area system. Enacted in 1937, this law levies a federal excise tax on sporting firearms and ammunition, handguns, and archery equipment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service then distributes the funds to the states on a matching basis for wildlife restoration, research, and hunter safety education. Over its more than 60-year lifespan, Pittman-Robertson, funded by sportsmen and women and recreational shooting manufacturers, has been responsible for conserving millions of acres of wildlife habitat nationwide. Montana has received more than $70 million since the program began here in 1941.

All told, Montana has 84 wildlife management areas comprising more than half a million acres. Names like Sun River, Beartooth, Blackfoot-Clearwater, Freezout Lake, and Elk Island are permanently etched in the hearts of hunters and wildlife watchers across Montana. On many of these areas, wildlife objectives do not preclude other beneficial uses of the land. Cooperative rest-rotation cattle grazing systems, pioneered by range scientist A.L. "Gus" Hormay and tailored to the WMAs over the years by FWP wildlife biologists Joe Egan, Mike Frisina, and others, have improved forage conditions for wildlife and fostered joint stewardship with adjacent landowners.

By acquiring and managing these special areas for the enjoyment of present and future generations, FWP is ensuring that Montana's priceless wildlife heritage will continue to prosper.

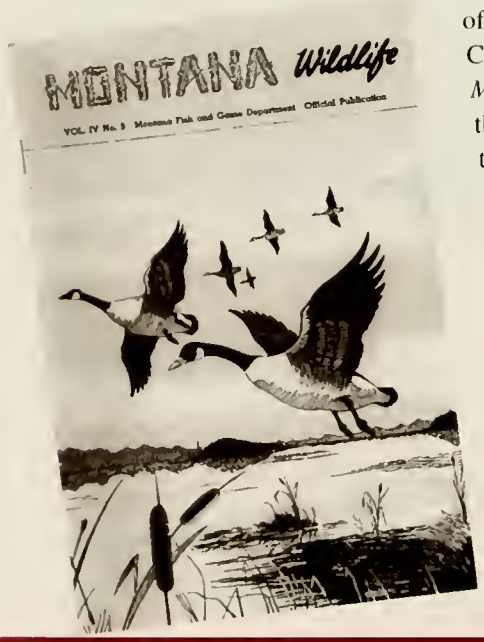
"The demand for hunting and fishing continues to increase at an almost startling rate while at the same time the habitat in which these animals must be raised becomes less....Only scientific studies can be expected to indicate the proper action necessary for long-range game management."

—Director A.A. O'Claire, Montana Fish and Game Department, 1956

Growing Pains

As the second half of the 20th century began, Montana's population stood at nearly 600,000, and one out of every three residents purchased a hunting or fishing license. The Montana Fish and Game Department had grown from six employees in 1901 to a staff of about 200, and in 1951 the Department budget exceeded $1 million. To accommodate its growing Helena staff, the Department moved from the Capitol building to the new Sam W. Mitchell building.

The agency now consisted of 10 units: Fisheries, Wildlife Restoration, Game Farm, Administration, Maintenance, Photo-Lab, Fiscal, Property Custodian, Engineer, and Public Information/Legal. For the first time since 1933, the Department again had an official magazine. Called *Sporting Montana* at first and then *Montana Wildlife*, the magazine was published quarterly and distributed free of charge.



Edited for many years by artist, cartoonist, and conservation educator Vern Craig, *Montana Wildlife* entertained readers between 1952 and 1970.

The decade began with an important new funding source for fisheries projects. In 1950, Congress passed the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Act, and these funds first became available to Montana in 1951. Like Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson (D-J) revenues are derived from a federal excise tax, in this case on fishing tackle. Montana has received more than $73 million in D-J funding since the program's inception in 1951.

In 1953, construction of Canyon Ferry Dam on the Missouri River near Helena created an exciting new fishery. Stocked with rainbow trout by Department hatcheries, Canyon Ferry quickly became one of the most popular fishing waters in the state.

Trout streams, too, came in for their share of attention. As retired fisheries biologist George Holton tells it, the Department had no reliable data on trout streams and rivers in the early 1950s. "We claimed to have 20,000 or 30,000 miles of 'well-stocked' streams, but no one could say with authority just how good the fishing was, which streams were best, and which offered the most future promise. We needed an inventory." In cooperation with Joe Halterman of the federal Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Department biologists came up with a classification system and map on which the best waters were colored blue—hence the term "blue ribbon trout streams"—and birth of a powerful tool for stream protection.

In the early 1950s, Montana's fisheries management was at a crossroads. "A stand must be taken soon on the place recreation is to have in our future economy," said State Fish

1952 Department resumes publication of *Montana Wildlife* magazine.

1953 First bighorn sheep season held since 1915.

1954 First Merriam's turkeys released in Montana.

1955 Statewide deer harvest reaches 100,000.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

Early electroshocking equipment, while cumbersome by today's standards, vastly improved the ability of Department biologists to determine growth rates and migration patterns of fish.

FWP PHOTO

and Game Warden R.H. Lambeth in the 1950-51 Biennial Report. "Problems of pollution, big dams, and other factors disturbing Montana streams must be faced squarely." Before the decade was out the Department would create a pollution control biologist position to address issues like irrigation, dredging, mine wastes, oil spills, pesticides, highway construction, unwise grazing, and effects of timber harvest.

To cope with expanding responsibilities around the state, in 1954 the Department initiated a major reorganization of field activities. By 1955, four-person teams consisting of a district warden supervisor, a fisheries biologist, a game biologist, and a secretary were operating out of district headquarters at Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, Glasgow, Billings, and Miles City. In 1958, a "district educator"— today's regional information officer—was added to the team in some districts.

In 1958 the entire Department was reorganized, with

1956
First statewide deer archery season held.

1957
Legislature establishes hunter safety program.

1958
"Blue-ribbon" trout stream classification created.

1959
Fishers reintroduced to northwestern Montana.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

Successful introduction of the Merriam's turkey in the 1950s gave Montana hunters a grand new gamebird.

formation of three major management divisions (Game Management, Enforcement, and Fisheries) and several service divisions (Information and Education, Administration, Graphic Arts, Engineering, Shops and Warehouse, and Airplane Services). With growing staff and budgets, increasing license sales, and more complicated hunting seasons, the Department was faced with major accounting and record-keeping challenges. Biennial reports for this period talked at length about administration, especially the purchase of "electric business machines" that improved the Department's ability to issue special big game permits and tabulate hunter harvest data.

With wildlife restoration still in full swing, most of Montana's game animals and birds continued to prosper. Bighorn sheep herds had recovered well enough by 1953 to allow a limited hunting season—the first since 1915. In 1955 the statewide deer harvest reached 100,000, and the elk harvest 16,000—an amazing turnaround, considering that in 1910 there were thought to be fewer than 3,000 elk left in all Montana north of Yellowstone Park! Upland gamebird seasons were liberalized in 1959, although the prairie grouse season still ran only two weeks and the pheasant season about a month—a far cry from today's three-month-plus seasons for most gamebirds.

To this already rich mix, biologists added the Merriam's turkey, a bird native to the southwestern states. The first stocking effort, consisting of 13 birds from Colorado, was made in the Judith Mountains near Lewistown in 1954. Between 1955 and 1957, three additional plants were made in southeastern Montana with turkeys from Wyoming. By 1958, the turkey population in the Long Pines region of southeastern Montana had reached 1,000 birds—a sufficient number to allow a three-day hunting season. Today about 30,000 Merriam's turkeys are scattered over much of the state.

The chukar partridge, a bird native to India and other parts of Asia, was also widely stocked in the early 1950s, but with limited success. These gamebirds now exist in huntable numbers primarily in the dry, rocky Bighorn Canyon area south of Billings.

Waterfowl, too, saw increased attention in the 1950s, with purchase of management areas at Freezout Lake, Milk River, Fox Lake, and Ninepipe. Freezout Lake, a shallow wetland basin located between Fairfield and Choteau, hosts up to a million ducks, geese, and swans during the peak of spring

Vern Craig's illustrations tickled the funnybone of magazine readers for more than three decades. These cartoons and snippets of text, from an article called "I am an Airplane," appeared in the Fall 1954 issue of *Montana Wildlife*.

Six years ago when the Montana Fish and Game Department purchased me, I was somewhat of an experiment....

and fall migrations. Recognizing the lake's potential for waterfowl, the Commission collaborated with the federal Bureau of Reclamation to control water levels through development of a series of ponds and dikes. Much of the credit for the land purchases, which began in 1953 and continued until 1967, goes to the late Wynn Freeman, who joined the Department in 1948 as statewide waterfowl biologist and later became head of the Wildlife Division.

Recognizing that scientific information would be needed for making future management decisions, the Department launched research projects on mountain goats, bighorn sheep, antelope, elk, mule deer, and gamebirds, and in 1957 established a Wildlife Laboratory at Montana State College (now MSU) in Bozeman. Game Division biologists benefited from close ties with university wildlife programs at Missoula and Bozeman as well as with the federal Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit in Missoula. As knowledge accumulated, some earlier concepts and practices such as game preserves, predator bounties, big game salting, buck-only seasons, and annual gamebird stocking were rethought, modified, or completely phased out.

FWP PHOTO

The Department's law enforcement personnel got a new look in 1954. Modeled by Game Warden Orville Lewis, the new uniform featured a cruiser jacket, western hat, and grizzly bear shoulder patch.

Due partly to conflicts over management issues and partly to the economic and recreational importance of fish and wildlife in Montana, the Department stepped up educational efforts in the 1950s. Information specialists published *Montana Wildlife*, disseminated news releases and bulletins, produced documentary films, made radio and television appearances, and gave talks at schools, sportsmen's clubs, and civic organizations.

The Department also funded extension specialist positions at the universities in Bozeman and Missoula to assist in public outreach. "In those days," recalls Dr. Picton, "Eldon Smith in Bozeman, Les Pengelly in Missoula, and other biologists gave hundreds of talks about wildlife management around the state. There weren't enough Department I&E specialists to go around, so Eldon and Les made media contacts and often set up contacts for other Department people."

In the mid-1950s, following passage of water safety and firearms safety training laws, Montana's 50 field wardens assumed broader responsibilities. "Today," said Enforcement Chief Orville Lewis in the Department's 1958-59 Biennial Report, "the Warden has many additional duties prescribed by the State Fish and Game Commission, and only about 30% of his time is spent in direct fish and game law enforcement activities." Those extra duties included conducting hunter safety classes, enforcing boating laws, investigating hunting accidents, supervising trappers, assisting with wildlife damage control, and auditing license dealers.

One of the Department's airplanes is equipped with fish-planting tanks and can carry 5,000 small fish for planting in remote lakes....

Mountain goat populations are best determined by aerial photographs....

So, you see, we airplanes are never idle for long....It's beginning to look as though we have replaced the horse and buggy in conservation work.

The Nation's

"It is our good fortune that the Northwest, and more specifically Montana, remains the natural storehouse of elbow room, scenic beauty, and wildlife. It may soon, in fact, become the playground of this busy nation if only the things that people are looking for can be maintained."

—Director Frank H. Dunkle, Montana Fish and Game Department, 1964

Director W.J. Everin's introduction to the Department's 1961-62 Biennial Report set the tone for the decade: "No other period of American history has witnessed as keen an interest in outdoor recreation as we are now experiencing. Outdoor activities are no longer considered as mere luxury; rather, they are gaining acceptance as an integral part of the nation's health and well-being." Montana's hunting and fishing license sales, which stood at 285,000 in 1950, had jumped to more than 383,000 by 1961. Hunting, fishing, and camping were the rage, and Montana was rapidly becoming a travel destination for outdoors-minded people from all over the country.

According to David G. Conklin, who detailed the history of the state parks system for a special issue of *Montana Outdoors*, the 1960s were a turning point for Montana's parks as well as for recreation throughout the nation. In 1962, President Kennedy's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission submitted its landmark report, and Congress established the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Anticipating the coming recreational onslaught, Montana Fish and Game Department Director Frank Dunkle established a Division of Recreation and Lands Development in 1963, and in 1964 asked Governor Tim Babcock to designate the Fish and Game Commission as the agency responsible for outdoor recreation in the state. One of the responsibilities of this new division was acquisition and maintenance of fishing access sites.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

The newly formed Recreation and Lands Division began acquiring and developing fishing access sites in 1964. Today, FWP manages 312 fishing access sites across the state on more than 30,000 acres of land.

Since 1929 when the Montana Legislature had first authorized the State Board of Land Commissioners to establish state parks, Montana's state park system had grown in fits and starts. In 1936 Lewis and Clark Caverns became Montana's first state park and in 1939 the legislature established a separate State Parks Commission. The State Forester, Rutledge Parker, also served as the State Parks Director. Due largely to Parker's persistence, the legislature finally appropriated funds for state park purposes in 1947.

Parker's successor expanded the system over the next six years but quickly ran up a budget deficit, prompting the 1953 Legislature to transfer all state park functions from the State Forester's office to the State Highway Commission. Despite limited funding, the Highway

1961
Hunting and fishing license sales reach 383,000.

1962
Bounty on mountain lions discontinued.

1963
Montana passes nation's first stream protection act.

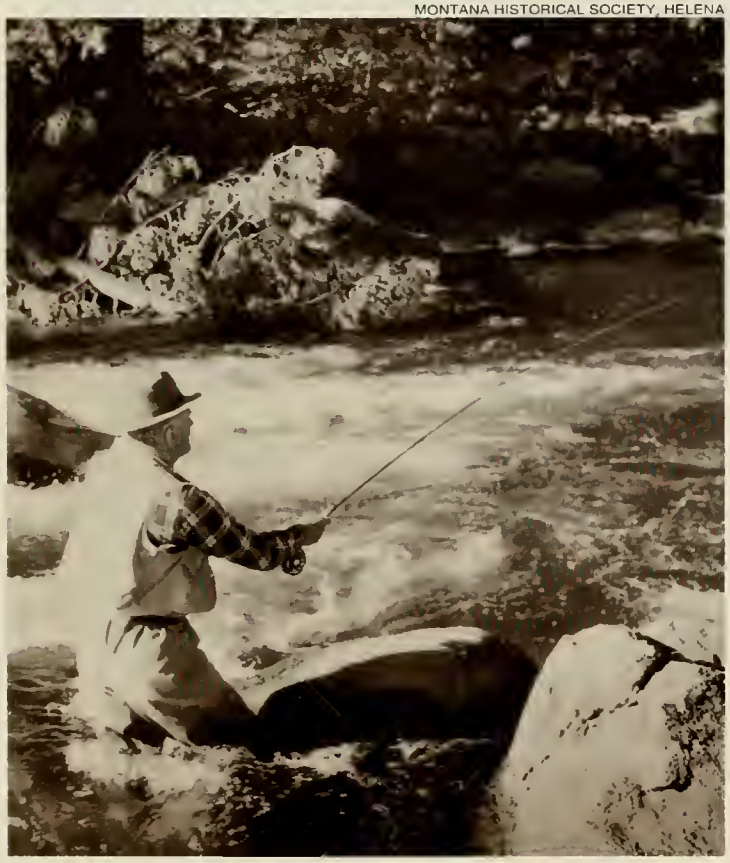
1964
Fish and Game Commission drafts policy opposing mass aerial spraying of DDT.

Playground

Commission made road improvements and acquired historic sites like Bannack, Medicine Rocks, and Plenty Coups, as well as scenic and recreational areas at Flathead Lake, the Makoshika badlands, and Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

In 1965, the legislature agreed to a request from Governor Babcock to transfer authority for state parks from the Highway Commission to the Fish and Game Department. With this new responsibility came a substantial funding

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA



Joe Brooks and other nationally acclaimed anglers visited and wrote about Montana in the 1960s, solidifying the state's reputation as a trout mecca.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

With the national boom in outdoor recreation, Montana's state parks saw a sudden increase in use. Here, a family enjoys an outing at Flathead Lake State Park.

source, courtesy of the federal government, in the form of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Derived from user fees collected at federal recreation areas, proceeds from sale of surplus lands, taxes on motorboat fuels, and revenue from oil leases on the Outer Continental Shelf, LWCF funds were allocated to the states on a matching basis for planning, acquisition, and development of outdoor recreation areas.

In 1966, the newly renamed Recreation and Parks Division began hiring regional parks managers around the state and, as funding permitted, park caretakers and seasonal help. By 1970 the system boasted 156 parks, fishing access sites, and recreation areas, as well as a rapidly expanding budget. For the first time, said Conklin, the state parks program had reliable sources of funding; in addition to LWCF funds, it had access to the state general fund, revenue from a state motorboat fuel tax, fishing license dollars for fishing access sites, and receipts from various park fees.

Tourists were coming to Montana to see the wildlife and scenery, but they were also coming to fish. Nonresident fishing license sales increased from 27,000 to 47,000 between 1950 and 1960, but that was just the beginning—by

1965
Responsibility for state parks transferred to Fish and Game Department.

1967
Sportsman's license established.

1969
Department creates Environmental Resources Division.

1970
Mountain lion classified as a game animal.

FWP PHOTO

The frontier town of Bannack dates back to 1862, when gold was discovered on Grasshopper Creek and thousands of anxious miners rushed to the Territory hoping to strike it rich. Acquired in 1954 as part of the fledgling state park system, Bannack now attracts thousands of visitors each year.

MIKE ADERHOLD

1970, nonresidents would purchase 110,000 one-day fishing licenses, 23,500 six-day licenses, and almost 7,000 season licenses.

Early in the decade, the Fish and Game Commission recognized the need to protect Montana's streams. "Fishing is an important part of tourism, which is of great economic importance to the state," declared the 1961-62 Biennial Report, and "the Montana Fish and Game Commission recommends the enactment of legislation designed to protect stream fishing habitat." With the help of the Billings Jayeees and the Montana Wildlife Federation, the Department launched a campaign to inform the public about the dangers of stream channel alteration. This led to passage by a narrow vote in the 1963 Legislature of the Stream Conservation Act, the first such law in the nation. Because the act was scheduled to expire in two years, the Department redoubled its educational efforts; in 1965 a permanent law, renamed the Stream Preservation Act, passed by an overwhelming margin.

In 1963 the Montana Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit was established at Montana State College in Bozeman under the leadership of Dr. Richard Graham. Supported jointly by the Montana Fish and Game Department, Montana State College, and the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the unit trained professional fisheries workers and for many years served as the Department's fisheries research section.

Pollution problems continued to be a major concern, prompting an investigation of mine wastes in the Clark Fork River above Garrison and pulpmill wastes in the river below Missoula. Another study evaluated the effects of DDT from spruce budworm spraying on fish, amphibians, and aquatic organisms in the Boulder River. This and other research led the Montana Fish and Game Commission to draft a policy in 1964 opposing mass aerial spraying of public lands in Montana with chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals (including DDT). "Since hundreds of tons of DDT were being spread each year," says Dr. Picton, "we would still be having problems today if the Department hadn't led the way in getting it stopped."

Dam construction, too, posed a threat to Montana's trout fisheries. A previously proposed dam on the Yellowstone at Allenspur, a few miles from Livingston, gained new momentum in the early 1960s. This dam would have created a 31-mile-long reservoir and destroyed more than 56 miles of blue-ribbon trout water in the mainstem Yellowstone and its tributaries, as well as altering the river's downstream flow patterns. The specter of a dam on the free-flowing Yellowstone alerted the Department to the need for better water planning and led to creation of a Water Resources Development Section in the Fisheries Division in 1966. Jim

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

The Law Enforcement Division adopted a rigorous orientation and training program for warden trainees in the 1960s that included firearms training from FBI instructors.

Posewitz, who headed this section and later the Environmental Resources Division, proved to be an innovative and eloquent advocate for preserving the Yellowstone. His efforts on behalf of the river and his other environmental accomplishments earned an American Motors Conservation Award in 1974.

Wildlife restoration work continued throughout the 1960s, particularly with bighorn sheep. Herds were established or augmented at several locations throughout western Montana, including the Tobacco Root and Highland Mountains south of Butte, the Cabinet Mountains near Troy, and the Rock Creek and Petty Creek drainages near Missoula. Winter range acquisition continued at Wall Creek in the Gravelly Range, Fleecer Mountain south of Butte, Calf Creek and Threemile in the Bitterroot Mountains, and Beartooth in the Big Belts north of Helena. Isaac Homestead was purchased along the Yellowstone River near Hysham, and waterfowl habitat work began at the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

Research in the 1950s and 1960s led to a better understanding of predation, causing the Department to rethink its policy on mountain lions and other predators. "Studies of the bounty system across the nation have repeatedly shown that bounties are not a constructive answer to predator problems," wrote biologists Fletcher Newby and Robert Brown in a *Montana Wildlife* article in 1958. As a result, in 1962 the Commission lifted the bounty on mountain lions that had been in effect since 1887. In 1971 the Montana Legislature paved the way for a regulated harvest by giving the cougar status as a game animal.

Despite the advances in wildlife restoration, fisheries management, and land acquisition made possible by federal funding and booming license sales, dark clouds loomed on the horizon. Resource development was changing the face of Montana. To cope with the accelerating pace of road construction, clearcutting, pesticide use, water pollution, and strip mining, the Department created an Environmental Resources Division in 1969. "The purpose of this division," said Director Frank Dunkle, "will be to make resource development as compatible as possible with the environmental needs of Montana's fish and wildlife, and thus preserve a quality environment for man."

Environmental

"Today's threats to wildlife are more serious than at any time in Montana's history. It's difficult to comprehend the environmental impact of extensive strip mining, overzealous energy development, exploding population growth or the fast-moving recreational land grab."

—Director Wes Woodgerd, Montana Fish and Game Department, 1973

The premier issue of *Montana Outdoors* featured a grizzly bear—the Department's long-time symbol—on the cover.

The Executive Reorganization Act of 1971, signed into law by Governor Forrest H. Anderson, shifted responsibility for hiring and budgets from the Montana Fish and Game Commission to the Department director. From this point on the director would be appointed by the governor and serve at his discretion. The Department also reorganized, adding a Centralized Services Division and combining the Information and Education Division with the Environmental Resources Division to form an Environment and Information Division. The firearms safety section, formerly in the I&E Division, was transferred to Law Enforcement.

The Centralized Services Division brought together administrative responsibilities in the areas of accounting, property and purchasing, licensing, land acquisition, and support functions that were formerly scattered throughout the Department. The Environment and Information Division was charged with addressing habitat issues, administering the Stream Preservation Act, and "offering technical assistance to other agencies and organizations involved with the environment."

With the national energy crisis in full swing, Montana was at a resource development crossroads. The new Environment and Information Division, under Jim Posewitz, was destined to play a major role in Montana's environmental future. Staffed with a cadre of young, dedicated biologists and information specialists, the division had an effective media outreach program, including a documentary film unit and a bimonthly magazine now called *Montana Outdoors*.

Strip-mining of coal in southeastern Montana was the dominant environmental issue in the early 1970s. Nationwide energy shortages coupled with dire predictions about future needs spurred interest in exploiting domestic oil, gas, and coal reserves. Montana's rich, readily accessible coal deposits were ripe for the picking. Since most of the coal deposits were on private land and could legally be developed, much of the argument revolved around reclamation. Proposed construction of electricity-generating facilities—a closely related issue—raised concerns over water use and air quality.

The 1973 Legislature tackled these environmental issues head-on and passed several measures to protect Montana's natural resources. One of the new laws, the Montana Strip Mining and Reclamation Act, gave the state wide permitting and regulatory authority over strip mining and reclamation

1972
"Hunter orange" law goes into effect.

1973
Congress passes the Endangered Species Act.

1974
Department stops stocking trout in rivers and streams.

1975
Legislature passes Senate Bill 310, the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act.

Battles

and allowed private citizens to sue for damages in the event of ground water or surface water contamination. Another law, the Montana Utility Siting Act, gave the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation authority to approve energy generation and conversion plant sites and specified that other state agencies, including Fish and Game, render an opinion on proposed plants' desirability. A third law, the Montana Water Use Act, specifically defined fish and wildlife as a beneficial use of water and authorized appropriation of water for instream purposes under the concept of water "reservations."

The latter act was to have profound implications for protecting the Yellowstone River, the potential water source needed by the developing energy industry. Due to strong public concern, the legislature in 1974 enacted a moratorium prohibiting large diversions or impoundments of the Yellowstone for three years.

The Environment and Information Division went to work researching the Yellowstone Basin's wildlife, fisheries, and aquatic resources. In late 1976, shortly before the moratorium was due to expire, Liter Spence, the Department's water resources supervisor, hand-carried to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation a 300-page instream flow reservation application for the Yellowstone supported by an array of scientific data. A few months later, the division released a special "Yellowstone" issue of *Montana Outdoors* and a documentary film entitled *Yellowstone Concerto*.

In December of 1978, after legislative amendments and a Montana Supreme Court decision had extended the moratorium, the seven citizens comprising the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation signed an order granting the

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Efforts to preserve the wild, free-flowing Yellowstone River bore fruit in 1978 when the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation granted the Department's request for instream flow reservations.

1978
Catch-and-release trout fishing tested on the Madison River.

1979
Department name changed to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

1980
Peregrine falcons reintroduced in Montana.

The Department's wild trout management program began in 1974 when a controversial research project on the Madison River showed planting of hatchery trout to be detrimental to wild populations in rivers and streams. Today, FWP's nine fish hatcheries raise fish primarily for stocking in lakes and reservoirs.

Montana Department of Fish and Game 5.5 million acre-feet of instream flows at Sidney plus flows on tributaries throughout the Yellowstone Basin—a major victory for wildlife and for the ecological integrity of the Yellowstone. Board member Wilson F. Clark later commented, "The board fully agreed with the legitimacy and necessity of assuring that adequate water remains in the streams to maintain fish, wildlife, water quality and recreational values. The problem was in balancing those requests against the equally legitimate requests for diversion of the water by cities and irrigation applicants."

In 1978, the Division of Environment and Information became the Ecological Services Division—information functions were split off and eventually reassigned to another bureau. In a sense, the division had been a victim of its own success—the powerful media campaign had rankled some Montanans, but the Yellowstone still ran free. In a memo to his employees announcing the breakup, Jim Posewitz said, "We had our years in the sun and wasted none of them. I am content to let history judge us; let there be not one sour note in our concerto."

While environmental issues overshadowed other Department activities in the seventies, a number of important events took place, including creation in 1975 of a program to perpetuate the state's nearly 700 nongame wildlife species. Another involved a philosophical and tactical shift in management of Montana's trout resources. Since the early 1900s, Department hatcheries had provided trout for stocking Montana's rivers, streams, and lakes. According to former regional fisheries manager Jerry Wells, who chronicled the history of the Department's wild trout management program for *Montana Outdoors* in 1985, "The Madison River alone was planted with over 100,000 catchables annually by the early 1960s....Human nature being what it is, fishermen were accustomed to seeing hatchery trucks plant the Madison and naturally associated catching trout with the hatchery."

But biologists were having second thoughts. Through sampling by electrofishing they were getting a better picture of trout populations, and what they found surprised them: Most of Montana's rivers and streams supported *wild* trout—not necessarily native trout, but descendants of planted rainbow, brown, and brook trout that had established naturally reproducing populations.

Art Whitney, chief of the Fisheries Division, decided a research project was needed to answer a fundamental question: Were planted fish having an adverse effect on wild

FWP PHOTO

A new headquarters building at 1420 East Sixth Avenue gave the Helena staff much-needed elbow room in 1976.

trout populations? Given the fact that the public had been conditioned to equate good trout fishing with hatchery trout, the project was not greeted enthusiastically in all quarters. But with the support of Whitney and Bud Gaffney, the regional fisheries manager in Bozeman, a young fisheries biologist named Dick Vincent forged ahead. The results of his Madison River study, published in 1972, showed that river sections left unstocked had wild trout populations vastly superior to those of stocked sections, as well as larger trout. Vincent found that planting hatchery trout on top of wild trout results in territorial chaos; wild trout must either expend energy to maintain their positions or give them up entirely, adversely affecting their survival.

According to Wells, a subsequent proposal to cease planting on the Madison River created a huge controversy. "Public meetings conducted in Ennis turned into personal attacks on Vincent and other department personnel. Anglers were polarized, with one side supporting Vincent's conclusions and the other side arguing that fishing would collapse if the catchable program ceased." Vincent's data ultimately prevailed, and in 1974 the Department stopped planting all rivers and streams capable of supporting wild trout populations.

Initial concerns about how this might impact the Department's fish hatchery system proved unfounded. With the change in emphasis from planting rivers and streams to planting lakes and reservoirs, and a shift from stocking "catchable" fish to smaller fish that grow to catchable size, hatchery output is greater than ever. Today, more than 50 million fish are planted annually from eight cold-water hatcheries and one warm-water hatchery around the state.

As if debates over strip mining, water use, and wild trout management weren't enough, the Game Management Division weighed in with controversies surrounding sagebrush clearing, pesticide use, oil and gas exploration, predator control, and grizzly bear hunting. The impacts of subdivisions were also hotly debated, as were the pros and cons of clearcutting. Scientific studies were conducted on many of these issues, allowing the Department to base its management positions on research results.

With strong support from Commission Chairman Willis Jones and later in the decade his successor Joe Klabunde, the Department made several key land purchases in the 1970s. Winter range acquisitions included the Gravelly-Blacktail Wildlife Management Area southeast of Dillon and the 56,000-acre Mount Haggin WMA south of Anaconda. Meanwhile, the Recreation and Parks Division was busily acquiring new parks and fishing access sites and improving facilities at existing units. Most notable were Ulm Pishkun State Park south of Great Falls and 2,000-acre Wildhorse Island in Flathead Lake.

Amid Department expansion and controversies over development and species management, in 1976 the Helena staff moved into a newly constructed headquarters building at 1420 E. Sixth Avenue. In 1979, to better reflect its responsibility for the state park system and its broader mandate to manage all wildlife species, the Department of Fish and Game officially became the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Thus concluded a tumultuous decade that began with reorganization, ended with another reorganization, and saw a handful of directors come and go. Through it all, the Department's proponents lauded its accomplishments while critics complained it had overstepped its authority. Perhaps more than anything, with the dawning of the eighties, the Department needed to take a deep breath.

Building Bridges

On the heels of the political upheavals of the 1970s came a new problem, this one financial. Department biologist and planner Tom Mussehl explained it in a 1980 issue of *Montana Outdoors*: "The sale of hunting and fishing licenses provides the financial base for almost all of the department's activities. It is these licenses—not taxpayers' dollars—that pay for fish and wildlife management. Without an increase in the price of licenses, or an increase in the number sold, the DFWP remains on a fixed income while inflation continues to gallop ahead."

License sales, after many years of gradual increases, had leveled off, and double-digit inflation had eroded buying power. Despite an austerity program that curtailed travel and left some positions unfilled, the Department's cash reserves were rapidly dwindling. Without a license fee increase—which would require legislative approval—the agency would soon be swimming in red ink.

The Department needed solid leadership, and found it with newly appointed Director Jim Flynn, Commission Chairman Spence Hegstad, and Associate Director Orville Lewis. A former legislator and staffer in the governor's office, Flynn understood the legislative process as well as anyone in state government. Hegstad, a determined and forceful leader, had a knack for getting people to work together toward a common goal. Long-time warden and administrator Lewis had a good grasp of the budget process and was respected throughout the Department. Together they crafted a new license fee structure, got the backing of the state's hunters and anglers, and guided it through the 1981 Legislature.

Once again on sound financial footing, the Department could resume building bridges to a variety of groups, organizations, and agencies—old and new—in the changing world of resource management. One of these bridges involved an old conservation partner, Montana's private landowners. Due to increasing hunting pressure and a changing agricultural economy, the state's tradition of free public hunting access was being challenged. More and more farmers and ranchers were leasing out hunting rights and charging access fees to help make ends meet. To address the problem, the Department created a Landowner/Sportsman Program and hired a coordinator to work with local committees made up of ranchers, farmers, hunters, and other interested people. One solution was a program to help landowners manage hunters in exchange for free public access—the forerunner of today's highly successful Block Management Program.

BLOCK MANAGEMENT

Other partnerships forged with federal agencies and private conservation organizations enabled the Department to stretch its dollars farther. In 1980, Congress passed the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, which created the Northwest Power Planning Council and directed it to "develop and adopt a program to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife...on the Columbia River and its tributaries." The Department's aggressive work in this area has resulted in expenditure of millions of mitigation dollars to improve streams for native cutthroat and bull trout, purchase conservation easements for wildlife, and create a geographic information system (GIS) for Montana's river basins.

1983
Montana establishes a hunting season for mourning doves.

1985
Legislature passes Stream Access Act.

1986
Block management hunting access program created.

1987
House Bill 526 earmarks hunting license revenue for wildlife habitat acquisition.

"As they were 100 years ago, today's problems will be solved and opportunities captured by cooperation and action at local levels. Anglers, conservationists, ranchers, legislators, and business people have given life to the future of Montana's fisheries."

—Patrick Graham and Art Whitney, *Montana Outdoors*, 1989

In 1985 the Montana Legislature authorized a state Migratory Bird Stamp for waterfowl hunting with the revenue to be used for wetland enhancement. Stamp sales generate more than $130,000 each year for wetland projects, many of which are cost-shared with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or private groups like Ducks Unlimited. A companion program directed at upland gamebird habitat provides funding for nesting cover, food plots, and shelterbelts in cooperation with county conservation districts and private landowners.

The state's first Migratory Bird Stamp in 1986 featured a painting of Canada geese by Victor artist Joe Thornbrugh.

Also in 1985 the legislature approved the sale of one bighorn sheep permit each year to the highest bidder to raise money for wild sheep management in Montana. This permit, auctioned at the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep's annual convention, sold for more than $300,000 one year and often exceeds $100,000.

In 1986, the Department purchased 2,600 acres of elk winter range in the foothills of Dome Mountain north of Yellowstone National Park. Two years later, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation spearheaded a joint federal, state, and private effort to acquire additional property to ensure adequate winter range for the northern Yellowstone elk herd. As a result of this cooperative venture, the 4,680-acre Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area provides winter security for up to 3,000 elk.

Perhaps the most far-reaching wildlife measure was enacted in 1987 with passage of House Bill 526, a landmark law that set aside a portion of hunting license revenue for habitat protection through conservation easements, leases,

Bighorn sheep management got a boost in 1985 when the legislature approved the sale of one sheep permit each year at a fund-raising auction. To date, more than $2 million has been raised for habitat improvement and research.

DONALD M. JONES

1988

Montana's elk harvest reaches 26,000.

and land acquisition. Two years later the Legislature passed a similar bill—the River Restoration Act—earmarking money from fishing license sales for stream habitat restoration. Together, these habitat measures conserve soil and water, maintain traditional land uses, and benefit a variety of wildlife.

While hunters were facing shrinking access to private land in the 1980s, anglers and floaters were encountering problems of their own. Early in the decade, the public's right to float rivers flowing through private property came into question on the Dearborn and Beaverhead rivers. The matter was partially resolved in 1984 when the Montana Supreme Court declared these waters open to public recreational use. In 1985 sportsmen and women rallied behind passage of the Stream Access Act, which confirmed the right of Montanans to recreate within the ordinary high water marks of all navigable streams and rivers in the state.

Beginning in 1981, increased fishing pressure on Montana's blue-ribbon trout waters made it clear that special regulations were needed to protect fisheries and increase the number of large fish in some waters. These included reduced limits, catch-and-release, minimum size restrictions, "slot limits" that require release of all fish within certain length categories, and artificial lure-only waters. With these regulations, heavily fished rivers like the Bighorn, Madison, and Big Hole have been able to maintain world-class wild trout populations.

To increase fishing opportunities for species other than trout, in 1983 the Department assumed management of the warm-water fish hatchery in Miles City from the federal government. Extensive upgrading and expansion of this hatchery, which produces walleye, northern pike, bass, crappie, and channel catfish, was completed in 1988, a year after the Department released its first warm-water fish management plan. By the end of the decade, thanks largely to the Miles City facility, more than 36 million walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, and other species were being stocked annually in Montana's lakes and reservoirs.

While access and habitat issues dominated natural resource news during the 1980s, controversy also swirled around issues like "sodbusting," pesticide use, steel shot, and bison hunting. Before changes in state and federal laws slowed its advance, sodbusting—the plowing of fragile eastern Montana grasslands to take advantage of federal farm subsidies—destroyed wildlife habitat and led to wind erosion reminiscent of the dust bowl days.

In 1981, tests on waterfowl and upland game birds showed elevated levels of the pesticide endrin, a close relative of DDT used to control cutworms and grasshoppers in eastern Montana. Use of endrin was discontinued, but warnings about waterfowl consumption stayed in effect for several years. That, coupled with a steel shot requirement in 1986 and drought-related waterfowl declines, resulted in a downturn in the number of Montana waterfowl hunters during the decade.

FWP PHOTO

Through Project WILD, FWP provides training sessions, curriculum guides, and resource materials on wildlife to school administrators and teachers throughout Montana.

Endrin was the last of the persistent, highly toxic pesticides to be used on a broad scale in Montana. DDT and several related compounds had been banned in 1972, resulting in a dramatic turnaround in raptor numbers. No longer afflicted by DDT-caused eggshell thinning, bald eagles and ospreys, once badly depleted in Montana, became common again. Even the endangered peregrine falcon, reintroduced to the state in 1980, began to breed in increasing numbers.

With the advent of steel shot for waterfowl, special regulations for trout waters, and increasing numbers of hunters and anglers afield, life grew more complicated for game wardens in the 1980s. The biggest change took place in the nature of game law violators themselves. Whereas poaching had often involved isolated, opportunistic crimes committed by individuals, now, because of the escalating value of wildlife trophies and parts, it frequently involved organized poaching rings. To combat this illegal commercialization, the Department formed a covert unit officially known as the Criminal Investigation Section (CIS). Initiated in eastern Montana at the request of Warden Sergeant Gary Burke, who realized that uniformed officers were too conspicuous in rural areas to make much headway against organized wildlife crime, CIS was expanded and moved to Helena in the early 1990s under the guidance of Director K.L. Cool. The Criminal Investigation Section, aided by TIP-MONT—FWP's toll-free hotline for reporting illegal activities—has enabled the Department to put numerous poaching rings out of business.

The Conservation Education Division took on additional work in the 1980s by assuming responsibility for education programs related to hunter safety, boating safety, and snowmobiling. It also expanded youth education efforts by affiliating with Project WILD, a national program that provides kindergarten through high schools teachers with instructional materials and techniques for incorporating information about wildlife into classroom activities. Project WILD was established in Montana largely through the efforts of Vince Yannone, who began developing FWP's youth education programs in 1970 and was nationally honored with the Project WILD "Director's Award" in 1990.

Throughout the 1980s, the Department succeeded in building bridges—to landowners, legislators, recreationists, federal agencies, Indian tribes, and conservation groups—connections that would foster cooperative approaches to the increasingly complex problems of the 1990s. The primary architect of these bridges was Director Jim Flynn, who led the Department through much of the decade with the help of Associate Director Ron Marcoux and Deputy Director Dick Johnson.

By 1990, the Department could point to significant achievements—elk, antelope, and deer numbering in the hundreds of thousands, a system of wildlife management areas supporting a diversity of wildlife, and cool- and warm-water fisheries attracting anglers from around the world. Six of the Department's seven old, outmoded headquarters had been replaced with new facilities, the hatchery system had been upgraded, and basic repairs had been made to the state park system. Yet, much work remained to be done.

W. STEVE SHERMAN

Widespread spraying of DDT in the 1950s and 1960s caused drastic declines in osprey populations due to eggshell thinning and crushing of eggs by incubating parents. Thanks to a nationwide ban on DDT in 1972, ospreys and other birds of prey began a remarkable comeback. Today there are more than 500 nesting pairs of ospreys in Montana.

Preserving a Way

JOHN FRALEY

As part of a grassroots effort, "watershed groups" made up of concerned citizens are working to restore bull trout in the Blackfoot, Clark Fork, Rock Creek, and other drainages.

1991
MT Fish and Game Commisssion renamed Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission.

1993
Governor Racicot appoints Private Lands/Public Wildlife Advisory Council.

1994
Whirling disease found in upper Madison River.

1995
Legislature establishes Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

# of Life

"The bull trout is a native Montana fish and Montanans have not only a legal but a moral obligation to maintain viable populations of native species. We owe it to future generations of Montanans to be good stewards of resources that are as much theirs as ours."

—Governor Marc Racicot, 1995

Like the cycles of drought and hard winters that affect fish and wildlife, financial problems predictably recur for an agency that depends on user fees. Early in the decade, Director K.L. Cool and Commission Chairman Errol Galt helped build the legislative support needed to pass a license fee increase that enabled the Department to cope with inflation and meet expanding program needs through the 1990s.

Following Cool's resignation in late 1992, Governor-elect Marc Racicot named Patrick J. Graham as the Department's twenty-first director. In January of 1993, Governor Racicot appointed Stan Meyer of Great Falls as chairman of the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission. Veteran wildlife biologist and administrator Bob Martinka joined the team as deputy director. Now, more than ever, these natural resource leaders would need skills in solving social problems as well as biological dilemmas.

Perhaps the most urgent challenge stemmed from the state's growing population, especially in the western valleys, where people were spilling over into habitats occupied by wildlife. "In western Montana," wrote Director Graham in a *Montana Outdoors* column, "land prices have soared and subdivisions have spread like knapweed. We have to act quickly to protect important habitats....clear policies and plans are needed." These policies took shape in 1993 with "Habitat Montana," a program tying together wildlife habitat acquisition, the state waterfowl stamp program, the bighorn sheep and moose license auctions, and other Department land activities. Through conservation easements, leases, purchases, and management agreements, Habitat Montana has protected thousands of acres of critical lands, improved hunting and fishing opportunities, and provided incentives for habitat conservation on private land.

In 1993, recalls Graham, public controversy over government ownership of land resulted in a legislative committee's refusal to release FWP land acquisition funds. "Chairman Meyer and I pledged to use these funds to acquire conservation easements rather than fee title to the land whenever feasible," says Graham. "These easements are working partnerships where the landowner gets paid to give up his or her right to subdivide the land and agrees to conserve land and wildlife values." The dual goal of conserving wildlife habitat and preserving family farms received wide acceptance, and by 2000 the Commission had led the way in acquiring conservation easements on more than 150,000 acres.

Montana's way of life entails a long tradition of public recreational access—a tradition increasingly challenged by changing economic times. Following a divisive legislative session in 1993 that pitted hunters, landowners, and outfitters against one another, Governor Racicot appointed a Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council made up of cross-section of hunters, landowners, outfitters, and legislators to

1996
FWP launches Family Fishing Adventures program.

1997
Visitation exceeds 1.4 million at Montana state parks.

1999
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation established.

RON WILEY

The new visitor center at Makoshika State Park near Glendive houses interpretive displays on geology, dinosaurs, wildlife, and early human history.

hear the concerns of Montanans and attempt to reach consensus on hunter access, landowner incentives, and stability for outfitters. As culmination of an 18-month effort, the 1995 Legislature passed House Bill 195, based largely on the advisory council's recommendations.

"The real heart of the council's proposals," said FWP Field Services Administrator Jerry Wells in a 1995 *Montana Outdoors* article, "centered on creating an incentives program that would provide tangible benefits to landowners who allow public hunting access." To fund this program, the council recommended sale of "variable-priced" deer and elk licenses to a limited number of nonresident hunters sponsored by outfitters. Thanks to the council's work in getting HB 195 enacted, the number of landowners enrolled in FWP's Block Management program was nearly tripled in a single year. Today, this program provides public hunting access to more than eight million acres.

Hunting itself came under attack in the 1990s, as animal rights groups pushed through ballot initiatives in several western states to ban hunting of mountain lions, restrict bear hunting, and limit trapping. To ensure that Department programs were biologically defensible and socially acceptable, FWP biologists developed statewide plans and completed environmental impact statements on mountain lion and black bear management. These were followed in 1998 by an environmental impact statement on the entire wildlife program, the first such document in the nation.

Changing times and a growing populace brought not only new attitudes and ideas in the 1990s, but biological problems as well. Whirling disease, a trout malady present in several other western states, was detected in the Madison River in 1994. Since then, it has been found in the Beaverhead, Missouri, Blackfoot, and numerous other Montana rivers. Chronic wasting disease, a fatal brain disease of deer and elk, appeared for the first time in captive elk at an alternative livestock operation near Philipsburg in 1999. Fortunately, it has not been detected in Montana's free-ranging herds. Introduction and spread of diseases, proliferation of noxious weeds, and illegal fish plants—all products of our highly mobile society—will challenge FWP biologists in the new millenium just as rebuilding wildlife populations did in the last.

Montana's way of life also includes preserving native species like the bull trout, Arctic grayling, pallid sturgeon, grizzly bear, wolf, and other fish, mammals, and birds that have suffered in the face of population growth and development. Bull trout are being aided by local "watershed groups" made up of ranchers, conservationists, and business people, as well as by biologists from state and federal agencies and Indian tribes. Westslope and Yellowstone cutthroat trout are being restored to native waters through a combination of habitat work, removal of non-native species, and restocking. Stream-dwelling Arctic grayling are making progress in the upper Big Hole River as a result of cooperative water conservation efforts and streambank rehabilitation. The grizzly bear is holding its own in some areas and increasing in others, thanks to efforts by many Montanans to coexist with this majestic animal.

Maintaining our outdoor way of life depends on healthy wildlife populations, uncluttered landscapes, public access, and *opportunity*. With the population shift from rural to urban areas and the increase in single-parent families, it's

more difficult today for some young people to get to the woods and waters. To help make fishing more accessible, in 1996 the Department launched "Family Fishing Adventures," a cooperative program involving public schools, conservation groups, and FWP personnel. By developing fishing ponds in towns and cities around the state, introducing the "Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs" program to public schools, and helping volunteers host "kids' fishing days," Family Fishing Adventures has given thousands of youngsters exposure to this lifetime activity.

Another program making outdoor opportunities available to more Montanans began in 1994 when the Department sponsored the state's first "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" (BOW) workshop. These workshops, held annually in outdoor settings, allow women to learn new skills or improve their existing skills at activities like archery, flyfishing, canoeing, shooting, and outdoor survival.

Along with efforts to provide more outdoor opportunities has come a greater emphasis on education. Based on recommendations from an advisory committee appointed by Director Graham in 1994, the Hunter Education Program adopted a new manual and a broader teaching approach emphasizing hunter ethics, wildlife identification, and sportsman/landowner relations in addition to hunter safety. A separate bowhunter education course became mandatory for all first-time bowhunters in 1991. Today, about a thousand volunteer instructors across the state certify 6,500 young rifle hunters annually, while 500 bowhunter education instructors certify 2,700 first-time bowhunters each year.

In 1993, based largely on recommendations from the State Park Futures Committee, the state park system received a badly needed infusion of funding. The legislature authorized an annual appropriation of $500,000 from the state accommodations tax (bed tax) and earmarked more than $1 million per year from the vehicle fuel tax for improvement of park system roads. This new funding enabled construction of visitor centers at Makoshika State Park near Glendive and Ulm Pishkun State Park near Ulm; extensive rehabilitation at Big Arm State Park on Flathead Lake; remodeling of the visitor center at Lewis and Clark Caverns; and archaeological preservation at several historic parks, including Rosebud Battlefield, Bannack, Elkhorn, Fort Owen, and Chief Plenty Coups. By the end of the decade, the state park system had grown to 42 sites serving millions of visitors each year.

Recognizing the growing desire by the public for an integrated trail system, FWP's recreation planners completed a statewide trail plan and programmatic environmental impact statement in 2000. Recreational trails across the state received a facelift as private trail clubs and public agencies completed projects funded by the FWP-administered Federal Recreational Trails Grant Program.

Of invaluable assistance to the state park system are the 1,500 volunteers statewide who donate more than 47,000 hours of service annually through the State Parks Volunteer Host Program. On a Department-wide basis, volunteers assist with everything from hunter education and fishing clinics to orphaned animal care and fielding visitors' questions at regional offices.

"Volunteers do this because they love the resources we manage," says Ron Aasheim, long-time administrator of the Conservation Education Division. "That's true of our paid personnel as well. It's not uncommon for our employees to spend their entire career with Fish, Wildlife & Parks. It's not something they do for the money—it gets in their blood." Emmett Colley, a hatchery bureau chief for the Fisheries Division who retired in 1985, stayed almost 45 years. Don Hyyppa, a former Parks Division chief and now regional supervisor in Miles City, has logged more than 42 years and is still going strong. "We're lucky to have the wildlife and recreational opportunities that we have in Montana," says Aasheim. "Taking care of these resources is our way of giving something back."

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FWP PHOTO

Since the inception of "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" (BOW) workshops in 1994, more than 500 women have sharpened their shooting and other outdoor skills.

DONALD M. JONES

Looking Ahead

by Patrick J. Graham

Reflecting on the past stirs memories and emotions. The struggles and triumphs of 100 years of conservation are certainly reasons to celebrate. So what will Fish, Wildlife & Parks directors of the 21st century face? Perhaps the present gives us some clues, as we review a day in the life of a director.

It's early January and the state legislature begins tomorrow. This cold, blustery day is a sharp contrast to the drought and wildfires that gripped the state in the endless summer. Monday morning you roll out of bed reminding yourself that you have the best job in the country. You settle back to read the paper and see the headlines: "Society for Preservation of Indigenous Red-Tailed Turtle Sues FWP." It seems you failed to ensure the inclusion of a turtle underpass in the new highway reconstruction project. Before you get to page two, the phone rings. Your attorney calls to warn you not to say anything inflammatory about turtles. You decide to forgo a second cup of coffee.

When you arrive at work to prepare your testimony for the legislature, the chairman of the Fish & Game Committee is in your office. He wants to know why in the heck you are spending his license dollars on red-tailed turtles and says you can forget about any fee increase. After wishing him a good day, you turn on your computer and find you have 487 e-mail messages from across America advising you to pull your head out of the sand and ban the use of leg-hold traps.

By now your eyes are beginning to glaze over. You decide to sneak over to the local health club. You get on the treadmill and start to jog. You look up at the TV just in time to see a gun go off and a mountain lion fall 100 feet from a tree, sprawled on someone's lawn, as the neighborhood kids look on. Before you can regain your balance, the treadmill sends you flying back into the wall. Suddenly, you know just how the lion feels. As you lie in a heap, the camera pans—from the department patch, to the lion, to the stunned look on the faces of the little kids.

As you limp back to the office, you start to wonder why

you got up this morning. Your secretary tells you the governor's communications director is on hold and two TV stations are on their way over for an interview. She suggests you get out of your running shorts and asks how you got a bruise on your forehead.

As you leave for the legislature, your spirits are momentarily lifted when you see a woman carrying a baby fox in her arms into your building. Then you learn she is one of the 487 people who e-mailed you about leg-hold traps. It's too late to make it back into your office. The TV cameras just arrived, the governor's press secretary is still on hold and you are trying to remember what it is that you like about this job.

River of Change

This lighthearted glimpse from behind a director's desk illustrates a shift in conservation philosophy in the country. Over the last century, the conservation movement has been largely grounded in a utilitarian philosophy—wise use of resources, sustainable flow of goods (trees, fish, and game), and scientific management.

A smaller, yet persistent, philosophy evolved at the same time—the preservation philosophy. It was embodied in the creation of national parks and later in designation of wilderness areas and endangered species.

As a society prospers and urbanizes, values begin to shift from utilitarian to protectionist. As our material needs are met, our focus shifts to intellectual needs. In Colorado, recreation and social scientist Mike Manfredo found divergent values where younger and urban residents had more protectionist views than older and rural residents. This shift is occurring across the American West.

This sets up a growing social conflict as we enter the 21st century. Some question whether we should continue to log our national forests, allow grazing on public land, or trap and hunt animals. It also creates some interesting dilemmas—*"Deer are eating my pansies—get rid of them, but don't hurt them."* A clash in values has also resulted in new, often conflicting federal and state laws, and a proliferation of new organizations and ballot initiatives. Looking only at the extremes, it would appear there is little common ground between people holding these values. On the contrary, both share a concern about the future of wildlife and wild places.

The single most powerful environmental legislation of the 20th century was the creation of the federal Endangered Species Act. Considered by some to be the final safety net for a species, it has increasingly been used as a way to control land and water use across the West. It is shifting the balance of influence from state to federal wildlife agencies, hastening the shift from utilitarian to protectionist philosophies already evident in society.

There is also increasing demand for maintaining and preserving biological diversity and ecological systems. We must conserve and manage large predators—wolves, grizzly bears, and mountain lions—striking a balance with the desires of hunters, landowners, and other interests.

There are other changes as well. Eastern Montana is losing population, while more urban centers and river valleys in the west are experiencing growth and the spread of rural subdivisions. From 1980 to 1996 three million acres of agricultural land was converted to other uses, and the number of farms and ranches declined by more than 10 percent. Direct conflicts between wildlife and people are on the rise.

Declining agricultural economics contributes to lower tolerance by landowners of public recreation on private land, and landowners may seek alternative forms of income by leasing access rights, charging fees for hunting, and raising captive wildlife. This, along with the increased sale of ranches to nonresidents, contributes to a continuing loss of access.

As a result, traditional activities, like hunting, face an uncertain future. Will access become so limited, crowded, or expensive that people will simply quit hunting? Or will hunters try to leverage access by reducing numbers of nonresidents and outfitters? The ability of hunters and landowners to find common ground may well determine the fate of our hunting heritage on private land.

Citizen conservationists, once represented by local rod and gun clubs, are now represented by myriad organizations promoting nearly every popular species, type of gear, and interest—from elk to bass, muzzleloaders to flyfishers, motorized trail to wilderness. These diverse interests combined with increasing tourism and a growing population will certainly result in conflicts and increased regulations on our waters and wild lands.

Unethical behavior—whether it results in vandalism of state parks, illegal off-road vehicle travel, or poaching—will also be a deciding factor in how future generations view the appropriateness of some activities.

Invasive species and disease appear to be as mobile as our society. Whirling disease in wild trout, chronic wasting disease in captive elk, and exotic weeds are undesirable aliens that are as difficult to prevent as they are to eradicate. Global climate change also raises questions about which lands and waters will sustain existing species in the future.

Technology may provide some answers for the future. It surely will change the way we communicate, recreate, and make decisions. People expect instantaneous access to information about where to go and what to do. Virtual reality could become either a substitute or a way to stimulate people's interest in experiencing the real thing. Voting online could spark even more referendums and ballot initiatives as an expression of direct democracy.

2001 and Beyond

All these changes, and more, leave many Montanans with an unsettled feeling. We fear a loss of control and stability because of challenges to our traditional values and practices. We are concerned about limits to personal choices due to loss of access and competition for resources. Some even see our livelihoods threatened.

Under that Big Sky

Having reflected on where we have been during our first century and some of the challenges we face today, now let us imagine the future we want to create.

Our vision is that *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will provide the leadership necessary to create a commitment in the hearts and minds of people to ensure that, in our second century, and in partnership with many others, we will sustain our diverse fish, wildlife and parks resources and the quality recreational opportunities that are essential to a high quality of life for Montanans and our guests.*

We must first maintain the long-term viability of Montana's natural, cultural, and recreational resources through investments in parks, open space, access, and habitat. Programs like Habitat Montana, Future Fisheries, Access Montana, Block Management, and the trail grants will create a base to ensure that future generations still have choices to make. The Natural Resource Damage Trust Fund in the Clark Fork basin created in 1998; the Wildlife Mitigation Trust Fund, an outgrowth of the Northwest Power Act; the Canyon Ferry Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund created in 1999 by sale of cabin sites along this federal reservoir; and the Montana Power Company Recreation Trust created as part of power plant relicensing in the 1990s are a few of the innovative programs helping carry on the vision.

We need to create and strengthen working partnerships with individuals, organizations, tribes, and agencies and broaden the funding base for wildlife and parks conservation. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation, founded in 1999, and the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) of 2000—winding its way through Congress as this is written—will help provide much needed resources to carry on the vision.

Partnerships developed by watershed groups in the Big Hole, Jefferson, and Blackfoot rivers valleys that created plans for landowners to voluntarily leave water in these rivers under extreme drought conditions demonstrate their willingness to carry on the vision. Hundreds of volunteers acting as campground hosts, teaching fishing and hunter education, and providing school interpretive programs help communicate and engage people in the vision.

We also need to serve as advocates for responsible management and equitable allocation of public use of the limited resources we are entrusted to manage. This is an ongoing process of engaging people in decisions to balance resident and nonresident use, commercial and noncommercial use, and recreational use versus protection of resources. These decisions will have fundamental impacts on the quality of experiences for the public and the financial stability of FWP.

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What choices will we make as individuals or as a society in the coming century? These cannot be predicted. What we do know is that Montana has something few other places have: the opportunity to make choices about our natural resources because we have conserved many of our options over the past century. Montana has some of the healthiest habitats and populations of bull trout, grizzly bears, prairie dogs, and many other species in the lower 48 states. Montana has a diverse land base and rich history.

Montana also has its people. Growing up in Montana, I listened to the debate about the need for progress—more and better paying jobs versus protecting the environment and safeguarding our quality of life. I thought it was a paradox—that we had to choose one or the other. Today I understand that it is not a paradox at all. What makes Montanans unique is we believe we can have both, and we are prepared to engage in significant struggle to achieve both.

Against all odds, the people of Montana took a bold step in 1901 creating an agency and citizen commission to bring back our fish and wildlife from almost certain extinction, and later to conserve natural and cultural parks. As we begin FWP's second century, we have the opportunity to revitalize that vision and build on one of the most successful conservation stories ever told.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Directors 1901-2001

Patrick J. Graham
1993-2001

W.F. Scott
1901-1908

Henry Avare
1908-1912

J.L. DeHart
1912-1920

C.A. Jakways
1920-1924

Robert H. Hill
1924-1932

Charles Marrs
1932-1934

J.W. Carney
1934-1935

K.F. MacDonald
1935-1937

J.A. Weaver
1937-1941

J.S. McFarland
1941-1945

Walt J. Everin
1945
1953
1958-1963

A.A. Claire
1945-1948
1953-1958

Robert Lambeth
1948-1953

Frank H. Dunkle
1963-1972

Don L. Brown
1972-1973

Wesley R. Woodgerd
1973-1977

Robert F. Wambach
1977-1980

K.L. Cool
1989-1993

James W. Flynn
1981-1989

Keith L. Colbo
1980-1981

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation, created in December of 1999, raises funds to provide critical private support for FWP in its stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana. For more information visit the Foundation web site at http://fwp.state.mt.us/foundation or e-mail at fwpfoundation@state.mt.us.